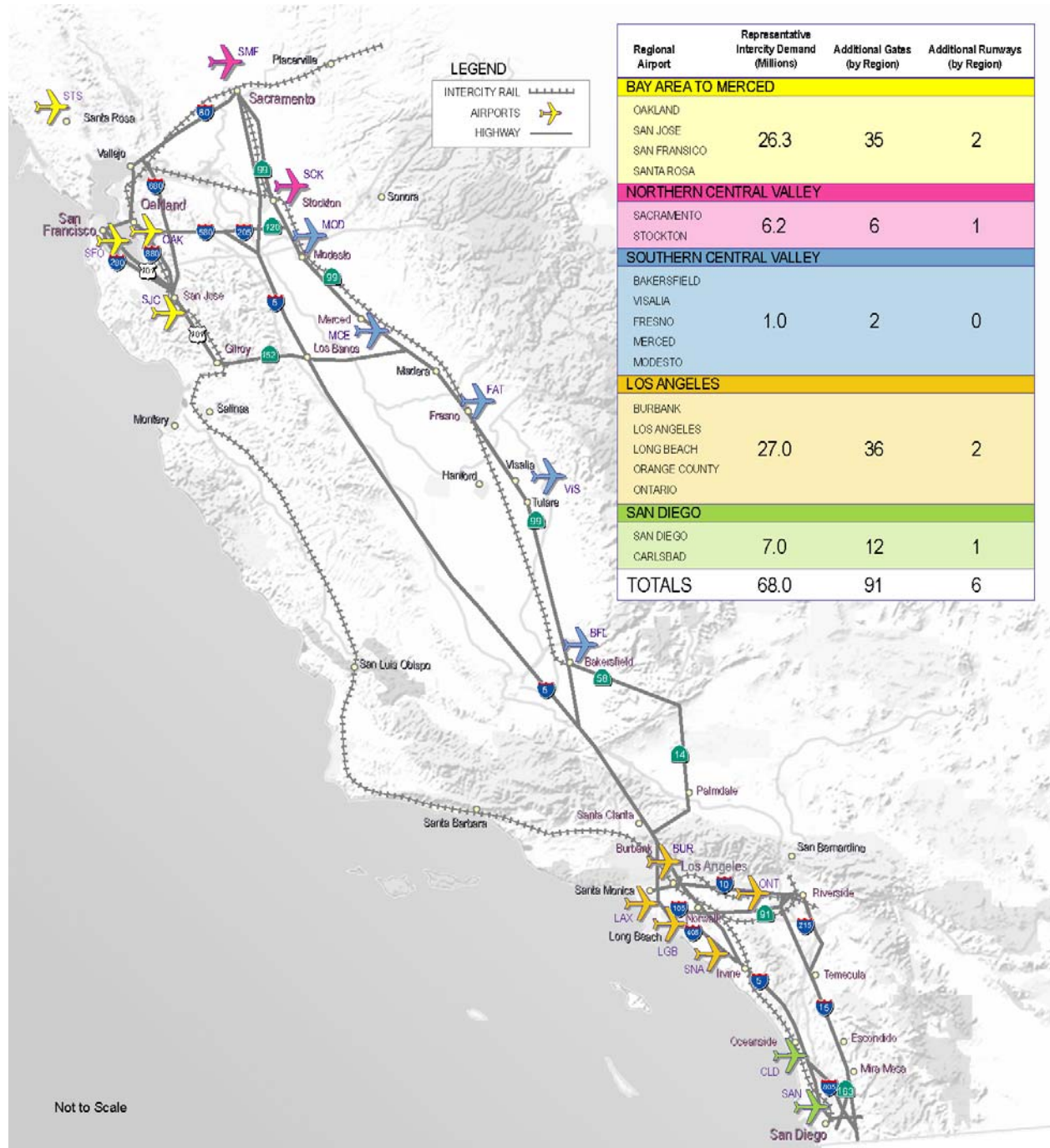


**Figure 2**  
**Modal Alternative-Highway Component**



**Figure 3**  
**Modal Alternative-Aviation Component**



**Figure 4**  
**HST Alternative – Corridors and Stations for Continued Investigation**





## 2.0 Baseline/Affected Environment

### 2.1 STUDY AREA (0.25 MILE) DEFINED

The Study Area for visual resources is defined as ¼ mile from corridors and around stations. This is the extent of area where a change in landscape features would be most noticeable to viewers, and new features introduced into the landscape could begin to dominate the visual character of the landscape.

### 2.2 EXISTING CONDITIONS AND FUTURE BASELINE

The Central Valley from Sacramento to Bakersfield consists of two primary landscapes, agriculture and settlements. Agriculture dominates the majority of the region with uniform topography, either of tilled fields, orchards, or undeveloped land. Agricultural areas also include highly visible utility poles and lines, arranged along the major roadways (e.g., SR 99 and Interstate 5). The settlement areas range from clustered residential subdivisions outside Pixley, to the mixed commercial and residential uses of towns and cities like Visalia and Madera, to the greater metropolitan areas of Sacramento, Stockton, Modesto, Merced, Fresno, Tulare, and Bakersfield. All of these larger metropolitan areas call for more intensive development and revitalization of their downtown areas. Relevant policies from the various general plans of these communities are summarized in the Technical Evaluation on Local Area Growth, Development, Planning, Land Use, Socioeconomics & Environmental Justice by EIP Associates (March 2003).

Along each of the alternative corridors, views do not vary noticeably from sweeping vistas of agriculture. The station sites of the HST Alternative vary from land that is undeveloped or agriculture (e.g., the Power Inn Road Station in Sacramento), to older station sites that are either in active use (e.g., Hanford) or underutilized (e.g., Fresno), to new or refurbished station sites that are pedestrian-scale (e.g., Truxtun Amtrak) or grand (e.g., downtown Sacramento).

### 2.3 LANDSCAPE TYPOLOGIES IN REGION

Four landscape typologies have been defined to describe the visual and landscape characteristics throughout the state: urban, industrial, rural, and vegetated. Within the Sacramento to Bakersfield region, each of these typologies exists and six photographs have been selected to illustrate them. Because agricultural farmlands constitute such a significant component of the visual landscape in the Sacramento to Bakersfield region, three views depict the rural typology and one view is used to reflect each of the other three typologies. Each photograph is described briefly below, along with an explanation for its selection for analytic purposes in this evaluation. The landscape visible from each viewpoint is described in terms of distinguishable (dominant) features that characterize the color, texture, line and form in the foreground, middle-ground, and background. Three of these views characterize typical station locations (urban, industrial, and rural) in the Sacramento to Bakersfield region, and three represent typical corridor conditions (rural with orchards, rural with residential, and vegetated) where visual contrast with the surrounding landscape and alteration of views would be most noticeable.

#### Viewpoint 1: Urban Setting

The urban typology is characterized by developed land, often including a mix of commercial, residential, office, industrial, park, or recreational uses. For the Sacramento to Bakersfield region, urban settings are exemplified by the proposed downtown stations: Sacramento, Stockton, Modesto, Merced, Hanford, Fresno, and Truxtun Amtrak in Bakersfield.

In order to characterize the potential changes and visual impacts from an HST station on an urban setting, a viewpoint was selected with an existing train station or depot, which would generally be found

in downtown areas. The Truxtun Amtrak Station in downtown Bakersfield is presented in Figure 6 (Figure 5 shows the location of the viewpoint). Adjacent to the Convention Center, the station is within a moderate density mixed-use urban area. This viewpoint (Figure 6) looks northwest from existing rail lines in Bakersfield. In the foreground are the rail lines and the concrete apron where passengers board. The middle ground includes the entrance to the station, a public area with a landscaped lawn, pavement with a wooden bench, and historic-looking light standards. Beyond the entrance is the asphalt surface parking lot. The middle ground also contains a shingle roof canopy. In the background are large commercial and civic buildings, including a 4- to 5-story structure without windows or other decoration, likely a parking garage. An 8- to 10-story hotel is in the middle of the view, and a 2 to 3-story civic building is on the right. The civic building contains regularly spaced pillars and a covered pedestrian arcade.

### **Viewpoint 2: Industrial Setting**

Common features of an industrial typology are warehouses, rail lines, and truck yards. For the Sacramento to Bakersfield region, the industrial settings include existing station sites, as well as groupings of industrial buildings along the rail corridors.

In order to characterize the potential changes and visual impacts from an HST station on an industrial setting, a viewpoint was selected within an industrial setting, which would generally be found along rail lines or outside populated areas. The view of the selected industrial setting, presented in Figure 8, is from an elevated position on a road overcrossing (Figure 7 presents the location of the viewpoint). (Downtown Fresno is to the east and outside of the photograph.) This viewpoint looks southeast from the Tuolumne overcrossing in downtown Fresno. This viewpoint shows the rail lines in the foreground, middle ground, and background. The foreground is occupied by the rail lines and unpaved (packed dirt) right-of-way. On the west (right) side of the photograph lie industrial buildings. The buildings are one to three stories in height and of varying building types and materials. They include brick two-story structures, concrete slab one-story structures, and sheds of corrugated metal siding. In the background on the east side of the rail lines is a baseball stadium with light standards about 100 feet tall.

### **Viewpoints 3, 4, and 5: Rural Setting**

A rural typology is characterized by open fields, orchards, vineyards, row crops, and isolated features, such as trees, houses, warehouses, and airports. This technical evaluation includes three views of rural areas, with differing adjacent uses: light industrial, roadway, and residential. These views were selected to illustrate the land use and visual conditions that are common within the rural areas of the Sacramento to Bakersfield region.

Viewpoint 3, rural with light industrial, looks south from Polk Street (and Power Inn Road) in Sacramento (Figure 10; Figure 9 shows the location of the viewpoint). This location is typical of the open field locations that are proposed for a station. In the foreground is a double set of rail lines. The middle ground is open field, and the background contains light industrial use. Two one- or two-story warehouse buildings are in the background along with scattered trees of equal height. The trees likely indicate the presence of a road in that area.

Viewpoint 4, rural with roadway, looks north from the Caldwell Overcrossing of SR 99 in Visalia (Figure 12; Figure 11 shows the location of the viewpoint). This viewpoint is from an elevated position, a road overcrossing. In the foreground are orchard trees of about 12-17 feet, an access road, and vegetated fencing. The split wood rail fencing is overgrown with shrubbery and only the top rail is evident. The fence likely demarcates the property line. To the east of the fencing is a wide swath (about 600 feet) of open field with utility lines and poles set midway between the width of the open field. On the east side of the photograph is SR 99. This perspective looking north shows the orchard, access road, fencing, open field, utility lines, and SR 99 continuing from foreground to middle ground to background. In the middle ground and background are scattered large (about 80 feet tall) trees along SR 99.



**Figure 5**  
**Location of Viewpoint 1: Proposed**  
**Bakersfield Truxtun Station**

**Figure 6**  
**Viewpoint 1: Urban Setting, Proposed Bakersfield Truxtun Station**



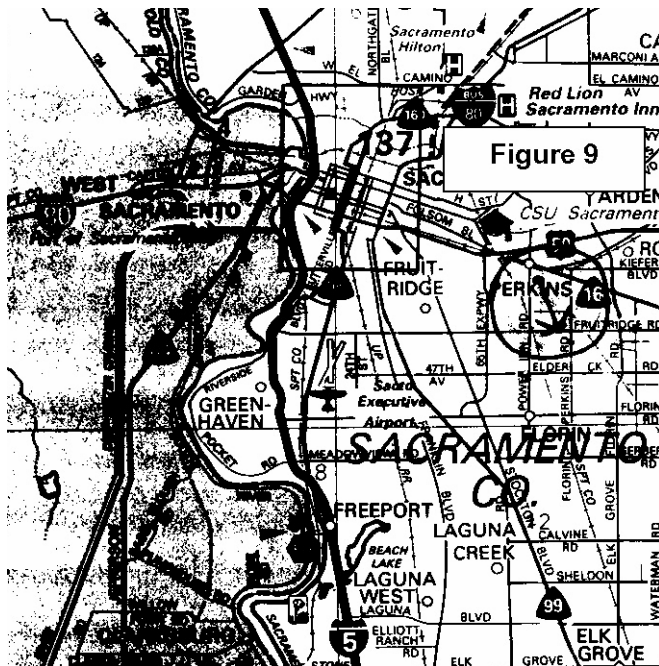




**Figure 7**  
**Location of Viewpoint 2: Proposed**  
**Fresno Downtown Station**

**Figure 8**  
**Viewpoint 2: Proposed Fresno Downtown Station**





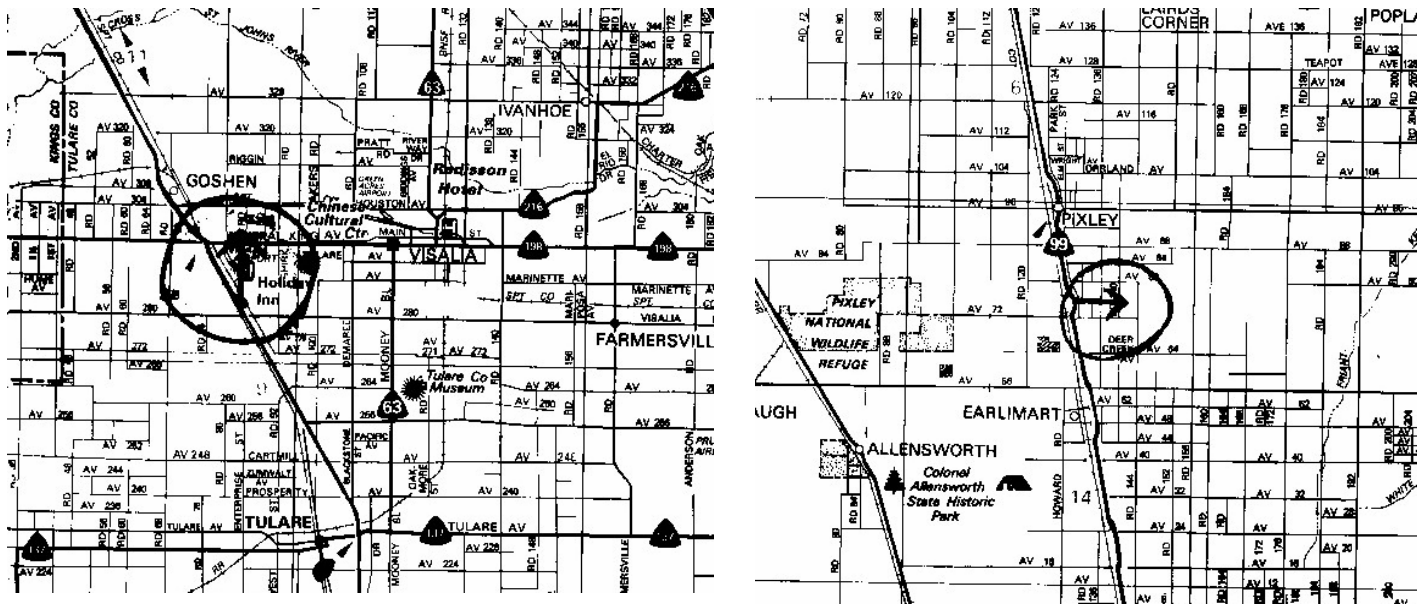
**Figure 9**  
**Location of Viewpoint 3: Proposed**  
**Sacramento Power Inn Road Station**

**Figure 10**  
**Viewpoint 3: Proposed Sacramento Power Inn Road Station**





**Figure 11**  
**Location of Viewpoint 4: Visalia and Viewpoint 5: Pixley**



**Figure 12**  
**Viewpoint 4: Rural with Orchard, Rail Line and Roadway, Visalia**

